

OFFICE OF GOVERNOR BILL RITTER, JR
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**GOV. RITTER THANKS TRI-STATE GENERATION AND TRANSMISSION
FOR NEW ENERGY ECONOMY LEADERSHIP**

WESTMINSTER -- Gov. Bill Ritter today thanked Westminster-based Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association for its leadership in advancing Colorado's [New Energy Economy](#) and developing the state's solar, wind and natural-gas resources.

"Since I've been governor, you've always demonstrated a desire to move ahead," Gov. Ritter told an audience of more than 200 Tri-State officials and rural electric co-op leaders at Tri-State's annual board meeting.

"You deserve a lot of credit for making efficiency, renewables and new technology investments a high priority as you look for new and better ways to provide affordable and reliable electricity to your rural customer-owners," Gov. Ritter said. "We are showing the world how to create a more sustainable mix of energy sources that includes energy efficiency, solar, wind and natural gas."

Here is the complete text of Gov. Ritter's remarks at today's Tri-State annual meeting:

Thank you to everyone here today for the opportunity and the invitation to take part in your annual meeting. Thanks to those of you who serve on the Tri-State and member cooperative boards. Thank you for your public service.

I grew up on a small farm in eastern Arapahoe County, so I appreciate the service Tri-State and the electric co-ops provide to rural and agricultural communities.

We face many common challenges as we -- together -- build a New Energy Economy, create a new energy future and lead this region forward.

The national economy isn't helping matters, from plummeting commodity prices to frozen credit lines to unprecedented job losses. Nearly every industry, business and family is struggling, and without a doubt, tough times still lie ahead.

But we're working hard here in Colorado to win the race out of the recession, to emerge stronger and be better positioned for the future. We've established a long-term vision and have put a solid strategy in place:

We have one of the best-educated workforces in the country.

Our universities and colleges are leading the way in developing careers in knowledge-based industries of the future like energy and aerospace and bioscience and technology.

We have one of the best tourism industries in the country.

And because we have a unique mix of natural and intellectual resources, we have become a national and worldwide leader with our New Energy Economy.

We are creating thousands of new jobs all across Colorado.

Our federal research labs and research universities are doing cutting-edge, innovative research that will lead us to a new energy future.

And we are showing the world how to create a more sustainable mix of energy sources that includes energy efficiency, solar, wind and natural gas -- and someday, clean coal and possibly even nuclear.

Tri-State deserve a lot of credit for making efficiency, renewables and new technology investments such a high priority as you look for new and better ways to provide affordable and reliable electricity to your rural customer-owners. Give yourselves a round of applause.

While I wish you were building this new 30-megawatt solar facility in Colorado and not New Mexico, I'm glad you're building it. It's a perfect example of how Tri-State is moving forward and creating its own new energy future.

Since I've been governor, you've always demonstrated a desire to move ahead. You were a leader in developing an agreement between the state's utilities and our Public Health Department to reduce mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants. I know that was a tough process, but it was the right thing to do and it was the smart thing to do.

Today, Tri-State is leading efforts around carbon capture, which is important to Colorado as a coal-producing state. Hopefully we can get started on a project or two to test carbon capture and sequestration on a commercial scale sometime soon in Tri-State's service area.

You are also out front on transmission development, which will help all of us move energy from where it's generated to where it's needed, including Colorado's solar-rich San Luis Valley and our wind-swept Eastern Plains.

On the natural gas side, you've contracted for 220 megawatts of natural gas capacity in eastern Colorado that will help meet growing member loads and integrate renewable resources. That's a real win-win for Colorado. We have plenty of clean-burning natural gas, and using it creates jobs in production, generation and construction.

While the natural gas industry is suffering just like many industries, and while rig counts are down all across the country, this industry is extremely important to Colorado.

The energy sector is one of the few that continues to show growth even in the worst of this downturn.

Last month, oil-and-gas companies submitted a record 1,100 drilling permit applications. And that's on top of the 5,000 permits they already have in hand for drilling in 2009. Companies are spending hundreds of millions of dollars on new pipelines and infrastructure. Clearly they're planning for the future.

And new rules unanimously adopted by Colorado's Oil and Gas Conservation Commission will help create a reliable and sustainable economic foundation for the entire state.

They will allow the industry to thrive in a way that is compatible with Colorado's overall economy.

The rules strike the right balance, a balance that recognizes the importance of a healthy industry and the importance of healthy communities, water supplies and wildlife.

But to help the oil-and-gas industry get through this downtown, I have directed my administration to move swiftly and strongly to develop Colorado's natural for use here in Colorado and across the country.

We've asked the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to speed up approval of the Ruby Pipeline Project.

We're working on legislation to extend a hybrid vehicle tax credit to compressed natural gas cars and trucks.

We're talking with Xcel Energy about using the Cameo power plant as a pilot project for a 1 megawatt coal and concentrated solar facility.

We're talking to a natural-gas company called Clean Energy about filing a joint application with the Department of Energy for a \$12.5 million grant. The grant would help build six natural-gas fueling stations around the state for commercial vehicles, buses and fleets.

Tri-State has long been looking toward the horizon and planning for the future. You have a lot of accomplishments to be proud of in the past year.

To be sure, there will be plenty of new challenges, too. Perhaps the biggest for utility planners is trying to predict what the rules of the road will look like once the Congress and the president have agreed on a national climate change policy.

As I am sure you know, last week the committee leaders on this issue in the House released a 650 page discussion draft bill. It covers a lot of ground, and we are still trying to digest it, but it looks like a fair and responsible starting point.

It would establish a national cap and trade program, which we all expected. It hints at giving at least some emissions allowances away to utilities to cushion transition costs. It makes further investment in clean coal a national priority, which I think is absolutely important.

But there are a lot of unanswered questions. I've asked my administration to reach out to Tri-State and all of the utilities that serve Colorado to make sure we understand everyone's concerns.

I don't think anyone could stand before you today and say precisely what the energy future holds for all of us.

But I do know we can't go back to the old ways of doing business. This is a new time and a new era with new opportunities.

Tri-State has been a leader in moving ahead, and I look forward to continuing our partnership ... continuing to build out a New Energy Economy and a new energy future ... and continuing to position Colorado and the entire region for a strong recovery.

Thank you again for inviting me to be with you today, and I'm happy to spend some time answering your questions ...